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A

TREATISE

ON

RAZORS,

&c.

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## CHARACTER

of the First Edition of this Pamphlet in the MONTHLY  
REVIEW for May, 1798, page 114.

*“ We have read this Treatise with interest, and with  
pleasure. It is well worth the attention of the public.*

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A  
TREATISE  
ON  
R A Z O R S ;  
IN WHICH THE  
WEIGHT, SHAPE, AND TEMPER OF A RAZOR,  
THE MEANS OF KEEPING IT IN ORDER,  
And the manner of Using it,  
ARE PARTICULARLY CONSIDERED;  
AND IN WHICH  
IT IS INTENDED TO CONVEY A KNOWLEDGE OF  
ALL THAT IS NECESSARY ON THIS SUBJECT.

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By BENJAMIN KINGSBURY,  
RAZOR-MAKER.

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NINTH EDITION.

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LONDON:

Printed by C. Kerwood, John-Street, Edgware-Road ;  
AND SOLD BY THE AUTHOR, AT NO. 165, NEW BOND-STREET,  
AND BY ALL BOOKSELLERS.

1821.

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*Price One Shilling.*



## ADVERTISEMENT.

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*I am aware that many of those persons who may hear of this Pamphlet, and, especially, of those who know the general employments of my life, will indulge a smile at the idea of the subject on which I have now chosen to write. To the latter I may plead it's connection with my present profession. The former I could wish to reflect on the number of contradictory opinions which they have heard on this subject; and from many of which they may find that they themselves are not free. If they are not induced by this reflection to think more favourably of my subject, I wish them to consider the many unpleasant feelings they have experienced, the many bitter complaints they have uttered in consequence of bad razors, bad straps, or something else on which the blame might conveniently be thrown; and to recollect the frequency with which such occasions of complaint occur.—In the state of mind which such considerations produce, they will, I doubt not acknowledge the importance of the subject on which I treat.*

NOVEMBER 1st, 1797.

# ADVERTISEMENT

TO THE  
SECOND EDITION.



*The public has been pleased to receive this little work with much favour.—In return, this new edition is presented to it's notice with all the improvement which the writer's time and means have enabled him to produce.*

NOVEMBER, 1799.



A

TREATISE

ON

RAZORS.

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SECT. I.

*Of the Weight, Shape, and Goodness of Razors.*

THERE are but four circumstances, of any consequence, to be attended to by the person who wishes to purchase a good razor; and these are, it's weight, it's shape, the excellence of it's substance, and the state of it's edge at the time of purchase.

With respect to the *weight* of razors, opinions are various, both among the public in general, and those who are engaged in the manufacture or sale of them; but most of whom have, perhaps, not been inclined to examine the subject with much attention, or able to investigate it with much accuracy.

Those, who have maintained the superiority of large and heavy razors to small and light ones, have, evidently, argued on the supposition that the beard may more easily be removed by the application of an instrument of great weight than by that of one whose weight is less considerable; and this opinion they seem to have embraced without reflecting that the pressure of the instrument depends less on itself than on the hand that holds it, and without knowing, or without considering, in what manner the edge of a razor is formed, and on what principle it acts. Without

out dwelling on the first of these particulars, which is of itself sufficient to overturn the unstable hypothesis of the superior utility of heavy razors, I proceed to explain, according to the best of my judgment, the two latter circumstances; to illustrate the unimportance of any great weight of metal to the excellence of a razor by considering the nature of it's edge, and the mode of it's operation.

It is a rule in mechanics to adapt the weight of a cutting instrument to the degree of resistance it will meet with. Thus, if a tough stick, or log of wood, in which regularity is not wanted, is to be divided, the weight of the instrument must be very considerable, and this weight must be increased by the celerity of it's motion. In other cases, (for instance, where the stick is not tough) a great weight of metal is unnecessary, and a common cutting knife will be sufficient for the purpose; force, in such cases, supplying the place of weight. But, with respect to all those substances which are not capable of making any great degree of resistance, it is not weight or force, but, principally, keenness of edge, that is required to separate them. And it is evident that the beard is of this description.

But the very nature of every fine edged instrument, and the manner of it's operation, as well as the slightness of those substances to which it is invariably applied, demonstrate the inutility of it's possessing much weight. The edge of a razor, a pen-knife, and every other very keen instrument, consists of a great number of minute points, commonly called teeth, which, if the instrument is in itself good, and in good condition, follow each other through it's whole extent, with great order and closeness, and constitute by their unbroken regularity it's excessive keenness. The edge of such an instrument acts on the beard, the skin, or any thing else, not so much by the direct application of weight or force, as by being drawn, even slightly, along it; because, by this operation, the fine  
teeth



teeth of which it consists pass, in quick succession, in the same direction and over the same part of the substance. My readers will be convinced of this, if they will make the following experiment on their glove or their hand, as they like best. Let them hold the razor either perpendicularly or obliquely, and press on it with some considerable force in a direct line from right to left, and they will have no great reason to fear the consequence. But let them move it from that direction, let them draw it towards them or push it from them, in the smallest degree, in the gentlest manner, and it will instantly make an incision. When they have made this experiment, they will be convinced of the truth of what I have asserted; namely, that, in the operation of shaving, very little weight, and even very little force, are necessary.

If, however, they still have doubts, if they are not yet persuaded that the weight of a razor is immaterial, and that the condition of it's edge is alone to be regarded, let them examine the teeth and mode of operation of a saw, which works it's way, not by it's own weight, nor yet, in any great degree, by the force of the hand which guides it, but by the quick succession of points arranged at due and regular distance, and cutting in the same line of direction. Indeed, a common saw is better calculated to convey some idea of the edge of a razor, and it's mode of operation, to a superficial observer, than, perhaps, any instrument whatever. It's teeth are distinct, even to the naked eye; they are formed in a similar manner, though (for a reason to be hereafter mentioned) in a different direction; and the mode of their operation, allowing for the difference of the object, is the same.

After all, I think it should be acknowledged that the weight of the razor is of little or no importance, excepting when prejudice in favour of either fashion leads into either extreme; and, perhaps, the best general direction

that can be given on this subject is, that every person should chuse his razors of such a weight as he thinks himself most expert in managing: for if, in consequence of the lightness of the instrument, the operation of shaving may be performed, in some small degree, with greater facility and nicety, it must, on the other hand, be admitted that many persons, from the influence of habit, can grasp a larger instrument with greater ease and pleasure than a smaller one.

I have bestowed a greater portion of time, and a greater diffuseness of argument, on this dull question than it's own importance may seem to require; but I know full well the extent of common prejudice on this subject, and have too often met with persons, of my profession and otherwise, who retail the opinions they have heard without either deep enquiry or even transient thought, but with a very high degree of confidence and obstinacy.

With respect to the *shape* of a razor, the next circumstance to be attended to in it's choice, I have but little to observe that is worth the trouble either of writing or of reading. The universal rule should be to chuse those whose edges are strait, and, on that account likely to take off a considerable part of the beard at one stroke; a form so simple in itself, and productive of so much convenience when either the hone or the razor-strap is used, that I am surprised to find that a manufacturer of skill and judgment can recommeud to his customers razors of a description exactly contrary.

The next particular to be regarded in the choice of a razor is the excellence of it's substance; by which I mean it's temper, or highest degree of solidity, and it's consequent capability of receiving, even after a series of years, a firm and fine edge. This is, undoubtedly, the circumstance of most importance, and to which the purchaser should most particularly attend: and I feel happy in the reflection



reflection that I can bring forward to the notice of the public a mode of judging of the goodness of a razor which may justly claim the praise of infallibility, and to which any one who pleases may have recourse. This method consists in the examination of it's edge by means of a microscope. The foundation on which it rests, and the inferences to be drawn from it, are as follow.

In the manufacture of a good razor, several favourable circumstances must combine. As the operations which it undergoes are numerous, so on the care and skill with which these operations are performed will it's goodness very greatly depend. A piece of steel of the best quality may in working receive many variations; and, when it assumes the form of a finished razor, may have lost all it's excellence. If, for instance, the blade to be hardened be too hot when immersed in water, it's grain will be coarse and rough; if of a proper degree of heat, it will be perfectly fine. The firm adhesion of it's parts will depend, also, on it's being well hammered. Again, if, in tempering, it receive not a sufficient degree of heat, it's edge will be too brittle; if the heat be more than sufficient, the edge will be too soft and yielding. If the degree of heat be different in different parts, it's effects, also, will be different. In the middle, for instance, the edge may be broken into small notches; while, at the ends, it is perfectly even and regular.

These variations, with some others, but all arising from different degrees of skill and attention, constitute, in fact, the principal difference of different razors with respect to their powers of cutting.—The question is, by what means can their different characters be ascertained without using them?

In many cases, the unassisted eye is extremely inadequate to the attainment of this object. It's powers extend no farther than to the discovery of defects of a nature the most

striking and injurious. The irregularities in a razor's edge, which arise from it's bad quality, are often so minute that a great number of them may remain undistinguished by the most attentive workman. They will, nevertheless, very sensibly add to the friction which the razor produces on the skin; and particularly, if it happens to be thin and tender.

It will readily be admitted that the excellence of a razor is in proportion to the firmness and unbroken regularity of it's edge. In all cases, a microscope of good power will, in the hands of an experienced and attentive observer, afford the means of determining in what degree it possesses these qualities.\*

The last circumstance to be attended to in the choice of a razor, is the condition of it's edge at the time of purchase. This circumstance, though not of much consequence to the person who thoroughly understands the use of the hone and the razor-strap, (I mean, of course, where the notches are removable, and not inherent in the razor,) is of considerable importance to the public in general. In this case, as in every other in which the purchaser cannot exercise a sufficient degree of attention and precision, it is, no doubt, highly desirable that the vendor should be a person on whose knowledge of razors he may safely place dependence; for very many are the razors delivered to the public

\* It is a curious circumstance (not generally known, even by those who ought to know it well,) that, when a razor is too brittle, in consequence of having been too much heated in the process of hardening, it is so far from admitting of an edge which is durable, that it will not RECEIVE, (without exception,) a proper edge EVEN FOR ONE MOMENT: In some cases, these irregularities (which no skill in setting and strapping can remove,) are extremely numerous; and may with accuracy be stated as not fewer than ONE THOUSAND. Of this formidable number, a great proportion can neither be felt on the nail, nor seen by the unassisted eye:

It is in this particular, though in different degrees, that the bad quality of high priced razors most frequently consists.

which



which, when sold, are almost utterly unfit for the purpose for which they are intended.\* So many are the accidents to which, from the nature of the instrument, it is exposed; so great is the carelessness or ignorance of those by whom it has been examined; and so general is the inability of the dealer to restore to it what it has lost, that, however excellent when it proceeded from the hands of the workman, it is often put into the hands of the purchaser with a wiry or unequal edge, and, perhaps, with several notches. These defects, we must suppose, are unobserved and unknown; but they are not, therefore, less real: and many of my readers, I apprehend, can testify to the truth of this statement. To guard against the effects of this ignorance or inattention, the common custom is to try the edge of the instrument in a few parts, or, perhaps, but in one, on the skin; and, after this experiment, the purchaser is generally, satisfied. This is a bad plan, because it easily, and indeed necessarily, admits of deception. The edge of a razor may be excellent in one part, and without any degree of keenness in another. If this plan, therefore, of trying the razor on the skin be adopted at all, it should be adopted completely. The uniform keenness of it's edge should be ascertained by examining it, in the same manner, from one end to the other: and this should be done with very great attention and precision. But, in truth, when a razor is finished, no such experiment ought to be tried with it. The only satisfactory and safe manner of determining the state of its edge, without using it, is, (as before,) to examine slowly it's whole extent with a magnifying glass.

\* On the other hand, it may with truth be stated that many razors of the best quality, and in the best state, are injured by careless purchasers, even before they use them:

## SECT. II.

*Of the Hone, and of Setting a Razor.*

HAVING thus treated of the choice of razors, I proceed to give my readers some directions for the skilful management of them. And I adopt this order on the supposition that, either from neglect or want of the necessary knowledge, their razors may need all the improvement which united attention and skill have the power of communicating.

It has been asserted by some, that a hone is not a necessary appendage of a razor, excepting when in the hands of the workman; and that the razor-strap alone is sufficient to keep a razor in order, without either setting or grinding. This opinion has proceeded from some of the most despicable of the razor-strap-makers, who, without a knowledge of the subject, and, evidently, without having attended to it, have attracted the notice of the public by the unceasing repetition of their advertisements, and their impudent commendations of their own articles. From this censure I must particularly except Mr. SAVIGNY, who, though he has delivered nearly the same opinion,\* is most justly entitled to the rewarding patronage of the public, and the respectful notice of his brethren. A similar exercise of candour is, I doubt not, due to many others; and, were I as well acquainted with their merits, as I am with those of the gentleman before-mentioned, I should pay them, with equal pleasure, the small tribute of my praise. But, with respect to the persons alluded to, who impose on the public, as their own discoveries, compositions the effects of which

\* See the first edition of Mr. SAVIGNY's Pamphlet, page 29, line 11, and page 30, line 2; and the fourth edition, page 30, line 18.



have been known for years, and who, even by the shape of their razor-straps, contrive to betray their ignorance, I know of nothing to which they are entitled but pity, and of nothing which they deserve but contempt.

The opinion that, when a razor has been ground and set, the razor-strap alone is sufficient to preserve it afterwards in order, has not received, to my knowledge, any better support than the general declaration of the fine edge which a razor-strap is able to communicate. The truth of this opinion I do not hesitate to deny: and, agreeably to my uniform design of rendering every thing as intelligible to my readers as my abilities and knowledge of the subject will permit, I will state my reasons for it.

To those of my profession, whose whole knowledge of the business consists in being able to spread the composition on their razor-straps, and to recommend themselves to their customers by their skill in puffing, perhaps the best answer may be plain matter of fact. Let them, therefore, examine a razor in the state in which it proceeded from the hands of the workman, and before it's appearance has been altered by the application of their own razor-straps. In the slight examination necessary for my purpose, they will perceive that the slope of the razor from it's back is suddenly changed when it approaches almost close to the edge; and they, probably, know that this alteration of it's form is caused by the setting of the razor on the hone. The fact itself they can distinguish, and with the cause I suppose them acquainted; but of the principle of that fact, of the cause of that cause, it will soon appear that they are ignorant.

But, to continue this appeal to sense, for the benefit of those whom interest forbids to be influenced by other evidence, I ask the maker (real or supposed) of razor-straps whose excellence is such as to render grinding and setting unnecessary, whether he can preserve, by his all-powerful  
strap

strap, that particular form of a razor's edge which is notoriously the effect of setting, and which every razor-maker knows to be the best, or whether it's continued use will not destroy that appearance, and produce an edge whose form is exactly contrary. Yes, the eye will determine the merits of this question: unless, indeed, it be arrogated that the whole body of cutlers are mistaken with respect to the form of the edge which they should give to their instruments, and unless it be conveniently contended that these wonder-working straps are designed to produce an improvement in their form, and not merely to restore the keenness they have lost.—Of this daring even the persons I speak of are incapable. An indistinct and mysterious, and not a precise and open, claim on the indulgent weakness of the public is most suitable to their purpose.

The edge which is given to a razor by setting is as fine as it is possible to give to it, consistently with it's object. It is called a flat edge:—not because it is really flat, (for perfect flatness can never be the property of any instrument that unites keenness with durability) but because it is, in general, almost flat, and in order to distinguish it from that shaped edge which is communicated by strapping. In fact, the edge which is caused by a hone is always as flat as a proper attention to the degree of firmness required will permit; and though, of course, it must not be entirely flat, it is, nevertheless, strait from the fulcrum which supports it to the very extremity of its parts. This cannot be truly said of the edge which is produced by strapping. When a razor has been strapped much, it's edge assumes a different appearance. Instead of being almost flat, it becomes, in a considerable degree, round;\* and, in proportion as it assumes this form, it

\* It is what such razor-strap-makers, as I have before spoken of, call a FINE ROUND EDGE; an absolute contradiction, and (as the acknowledged effect of their straps) an ample refutation of their own hypothesis.



loses its keenness. The fact itself is perceptible by the eye of any one: the inference from it is clear to the understanding of the most dull.

A little reflection on the object to be gained by strapping, and on the fitness of a razor-strap to secure the attainment of it, will satisfactorily account for this fact, and, at the same time, establish the necessity of its existence. What, then, is the object which, by the use of the razor-strap, we design to obtain? If it be said that this object is the production of the utmost keenness of which a razor is capable, and that the razor-strap alone is sufficient for this purpose,\* I ask why, if this is the case, the hone is resorted to in the first instance; and, more particularly, why, by means of a hone, we produce an edge that is almost flat, when the strap which is to succeed it, and which, by supposition, supersedes its use ever after, communicates an edge that is exactly the reverse. The fact is, that the proper use of the razor-strap is to smooth the edge of a razor after setting, and when it becomes rough by the strength of the beard it engages with; and, by smoothing it, to add, in a certain degree, to its keenness. I say that this is the proper use of the razor-strap; because I think I have already proved, not only that the flattest and thinnest edge must always be the keenest, but that razor-straps, instead of being calculated to produce this edge, do, in fact, produce, by continued use, what is called a round one. This must, indeed, be necessarily the case, on account of the very nature of a razor-strap. Opposite in its nature to a hone, the razor-strap is a soft and yielding

\* I wish to preserve my readers from mistake? The assertion that the razor-strap alone will not give to a razor all the keenness which it is capable of receiving, does not militate against the doctrine, which I afterwards lay down, that the use of the strap is to smooth, and, to a certain degree, to sharpen the edge of a razor after setting. It is against the continued use of the strap, without ever recurring to the hone, that I am arguing.

substance; and must, therefore, produce an edge not only different in it's form from that which is caused by setting, but possessing, likewise, less keenness. As the razor is drawn along or across the strap, it's edge is almost encompassed by the softness of the leather and the composition, which, when free from pressure, return, of course, to their former situation, and naturally form a declivity down which the edge is continually passing. That this is the case, must be evident to a person of common reflection. If, however, it's truth be doubted, such doubt may be removed by drawing the razor along some substance which is yet more elastic; and by recollecting that, as a razor's edge is extremely fine, a small degree of declivity will produce the effect.

Let it, however, be understood that this effect will, in some degree, vary with different razor-straps, according to the manner in which they are made. But this variation can produce no change in the position that the use of the most vaunted strap will not render setting unnecessary, and that the person who wishes his razors should, at all times, be capable of cutting as keenly as they can be made to cut, consistently with a due regard to the degree of strength required, will occasionally have recourse to the assistance of the hone.

I now proceed to offer such brief instructions for the use of the hone as seem necessary to remove the errors and difficulties which prevail on this subject. To me, I acknowledge, it appears that these difficulties are imaginary; and that to set a razor well is, at least, as easy as to strap it well. In this case, as in many others, the difficulty arises from supposing there is difficulty; and as, on subjects which prejudice has darkened, we have only to diffuse the light of reason to make the whole system of error vanish, so, when difficulties are the offspring of mere imagination, a little rational explanation may, at once, make the matter simple in theory, and easy in practice.

The



The first thing that should be done to the hone is to wipe it clean; and the second is to spread a few drops of pure oil on it, or on that part of it which is to be used. Of these two most difficult operations the objects are to prevent any particles of dirt, or other substance, from remaining on the hone, and impeding it's full and equal effect; and, also, to render the edge produced by it as fine and smooth as possible. When the operator has proceeded thus far, let him place his thumb and fore-finger, sideways, on that part of the tang of the razor at which the handle terminates, so as to have firm hold both of the razor and it's handle. Let him then lay one side of the razor flat across the hone, and so that the shoulder of the razor (which adjoins the tang) may touch the nearest part of it. Having gained this position, he may begin to draw the razor towards him, in a manner somewhat circular, and with a moderate degree of pressure, till he arrives at the very point of it. When this has been done on one side, the razor should be turned, and the same operation take place on the other side of it. In this manner he may proceed till the hone has produced the desired effect. This effect will be evident from the wiry appearance which the edge of the razor assumes when sufficiently honed; and, till this wire is produced from one end of the razor to the other, the operation is not complete. When, from the appearance of the wire, he is convinced that the edge is worn to a sufficient degree of thinness, let him draw each side of the razor alternately across the hone, from the shoulder to the point, in order to unite all the parts of the edge, and produce a perfect regularity and smoothness. When this is done, the whole business is, in general, performed, and the wondrous difficulty vanishes.

In the whole of this operation, the most important circumstances to be attended to, are to begin at the shoulder of the razor, and proceed regularly to the point; to keep it

quite flat, not raising the back in any degree; to press with as much force (and, with a good hone, very little is necessary) on one part of the edge as on the other; to observe that the wire is produced throughout the whole extent;\* and to remove all irregularities, and cause a perfect equality of keenness, from one end to the other, by drawing it along, in the finishing strokes, in the manner I have recommended. It may be added that it is proper to hone the razor as much on one side as on the other.

When the edge of a razor that requires setting is in the usual state, that is, when it is free from notches, and is merely become thick in consequence of the use of the razor-strap, it will be found that very little honing is necessary to bring it to a proper condition. In this state razors generally are, when they require setting; and, indeed, they are never otherwise, unless they are treated with shameful carelessness. When the edge has notches in it, though so small as to be scarcely perceptible, the operation requires, of course, more time and more attention. Still, however, a good hone is fully sufficient for the purpose. But when these notches are large, it is better that the cutler should have recourse to grinding.

The common methods of setting razors are, in several respects, defective. In the first place, it is usual to begin honing at the point, instead of the heel of the razor.† When this is not the case, the operator generally begins at that part of the edge (it's middle, for instance) which is most dull, and which, therefore, in his opinion, requires most honing. The first method is a wrong one, because it is impossible in

\* The wire will frequently, when the razor requires much honing, separate from the edge, and remain on the hone. This must, of course, be allowed for.

† At present, a greater degree of knowledge prevails on this subject. The extended circulation of this pamphlet, and the notice it has excited, appear to have been productive of some good; at least, among private persons.



this manner to set a razor so regularly as in the way I have recommended. The second is much more wrong, because it's sure consequences are the utmost keenness in one part, and a total want of it in another. In this manner, however, do the setters of razors, professional or otherwise, frequently operate; and hence it may be truly said, that so far from being able to answer for the perfection of the instruments which they sell, a great part of the dealers in this article are not even capable of communicating to a well-wrought razor that exquisite degree of keenness which experience and skill have power to bestow.

I have recommended it to my readers to lay their razors flat on the hone, when they are going to set them; and have asserted that, in this manner the operation should, in general, be performed. I know of but two exceptions to this general rule. These exceptions take place, first, when the razor (properly formed,) is intended for a beard of unusual strength; and secondly, when, (though not intended for a very stiff beard,) it's breadth is too great, or it's back too thin, to admit of it's edge receiving, by flat setting, a sufficient degree of firmness for the purpose. In these cases, the back must be raised a little during the finishing of the operation, in order that the strength of the edge may be proportioned to the degree of resistance it will meet with. In my own opinion, such cases are, comparatively, rare. However, when they do occur, great attention and a steady hand are requisite.

I am aware that the propriety of the general rule I have laid down has been controverted and denied. I am aware, too, that it has been denied by a person whose professional merit entitles him, even in my own opinion, to the most respectful attention. But I have no hesitation in saying, that I feel no doubt on this subject; and I imagine that the manufacturer I speak of, would, on re-considering the question, depart from his former opinion. Let the public, however, decide between us.

Mr.

Mr. SAVIGNY begins with observing\* that, “the manner of setting a razor, as he has *constantly* heard prescribed, is to apply it flat on the hone, observing that the back and edge touch at the same time; and that surely a man without the assistance of a supernatural genius, may easily perceive, that though this may sometimes be a proper direction, it cannot however be always so.”—Thus far we agree, but this was not the point at issue between us. He adds that, “he thinks he may venture to say, it can very seldom take place, as the circumstance that gives it propriety, is very rarely found; it depending upon the thickness of the back being exactly proportioned to the breadth of the razor;” that, “admitting this manner of setting razors was proper, with respect to those which had thick backs, it is very evident that it must be quite the reverse with those of a thin make;—and that hence it appears, how injudicious it is, to lay it down as a *general* rule; for the very circumstance that renders it eligible in the one case, entirely oversets it in the other.”—Surely, in the latter part of this quotation, Mr. SAVIGNY should have substituted the word *universal* for *general*: as, indeed, the tenor of his own argument requires. The truth seems to be that Mr. SAVIGNY had neglected to methodise his ideas, (a very common fault with writers, and, especially, with young writers,) before he began to write; for, otherwise, he would not have fallen into this evident confusion, or have observed so unnecessarily (as he afterwards does,) “that a workman will be always nearer the right, in consulting his own judgment in this matter, than in trusting *indiscriminately* on the thickness of the razor he has to

\* See the first edition of Mr. SAVIGNY's pamphlet, pages 30, and 34. In the last edition; printed in 1786, the whole chapter on setting razors is omitted. I am unable to discover the consistency with which the author can state in this edition, that he “has treated on every thing necessary to compleat the equipage.”



“set.” Of indiscriminate dependence on this particular, certainly no workman is capable; and certainly, too, though this would be wrong, the rule I have laid down may be generally, and very generally, right.

With respect to the question itself, whether a razor will receive, by flat setting, that kind of edge which is generally proper, I have to observe that it is the object of all razor-makers so to proportion the thickness of a razor to it's breadth, as to make it capable of receiving, by the mode of setting I have recommended, that exact degree of strength in it's edge which is found to be, in general, necessary. When a razor is intended to be heavier than usual, it's back is so formed as to give the degree of weight required without adding to the breadth of that part which is intended to rest on the hone. That razor-makers usually fail in these particulars, no one, I imagine, will assert. When they do fail, an exception to the general rule takes place, as I have before stated.

I have endeavoured to prove, in the former part of this section, that ignorant or artful razor-strap-makers have led the public into error in making them believe that their straps are capable of keeping a razor in order without setting. Though I have, perhaps, established, at least in some minds, a conviction of the necessity of recurring, occasionally, to the assistance of the hone, I can inform the public, in return, in what particular they may practise œconomy to an equal or a greater amount. This may be done in the grinding of razors. When the edge of a razor is dull, either from the want of a good strap, the never-failing tendency of even the best of them, or the unskilful manner in which they are generally used, how common is it for the owner to imagine that it needs grinding, and particularly when it has been lately set, (perhaps by an unskilful hand,) and yet will not perform pleasantly? This is

a mis-

a mi-taken opinion which cutlers, or, at least, many of them, are too ready to confirm. The consequence is, that steel of the best quality is frequently thrown away. When I witness this folly and deception, (and I witness or hear of them very often,) I confess that I feel concern, and some indignation, too, at the extent of their influence. This influence not only extends to the shameful waste of an excellent instrument in the first instance, but sometimes renders it necessary to grind it again,\* merely on account of it's having been badly ground, when it did not require grinding. My conviction of the frequency of this practice and of it's mischievous consequences induces me to assure the public that razors, properly formed, will, in the course of fair use, and with a right mode of setting and strapping, seldom require grinding. It is an absolute impossibility that they should. For, in the first place, a razor that is not ill used, will never have any notches in it, unless the steel was spoilt by unskilfulness or inattention in the working of it; and, when this is the case, setting and grinding are, as I have before proved, equally inefficacious. Nor will it frequently need grinding in consequence of it's breadth being lessened by the use of the hone and the razor strap; for, as it's breadth is diminished, the thickness of it's back is diminished likewise, and in the exact proportion that is necessary. This, I state, is the case, when a right mode of setting is adopted. But, if the back of the instrument is raised, in any degree, during this operation,

\* It is by no means unusual with grinders of little judgment to wear away the breadth of the instrument, without diminishing, at the same time, the thickness of it's back. I wish I could say that this practice is confined to the lower class of grinders; but I have known some of the best of our London razor-makers frequently guilty of this negligence. When a razor is ground in this manner, so great a want of care or judgment is discovered as to render the practice in no small degree disgraceful.

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the time will, I acknowledge, soon come when it will require grinding.

For the information of those who do not know how to set a pen-knife, I beg leave to state (though it is not necessarily connected with my subject) that the manner of setting instruments intended to overcome a great degree of resistance is different from that which must be adopted for those against which the resistance will be trifling. For the former purpose, greater strength must be given to the edge; and, to do this in a proper manner according to the nature of the instrument, the back must be raised to different degrees of elevation. The rule for setting a pen-knife is to raise the back but a little. However, this rule must vary according as the thickness of the instrument is proportioned to its breadth—In all other respects, the mode of setting should be the same as that before recommended. But, when the back of any instrument is raised from the hone, a steady hand is particularly necessary.

### SECT. III.

#### *Of the Razor-Strap, and of Strapping a Razor.*

THE first observation on this subject, which appears to me worthy of the attention of my readers, relates to the form of a razor-strap. What, then, is the form in which the sides of a razor-strap should be made? I reply, without hesitation, that every razor-strap should be flat; for in this form it is calculated to produce the best effect. It corresponds with the shape of the instrument that is to be applied to it, it possesses all the advantages which the contrary form can possibly possess, and it is free from all its never-failing disadvantages.

It may seem a simple remark, but it is a remark decisive on this simple subject, that, so long as razors are flat, the straps to be used with them should be flat, likewise. In the name of common sense, why should they be otherwise? If it be asserted that the smoothing side of the strap should be round in order to produce a greater degree of elasticity and softness, I answer that I have already demonstrated the stupidity of the assertion, by proving, in the last section, that the necessary tendency, the ultimate effect, even of razor-straps that are properly formed, is to round the edge of the instrument too much, and thus to render it less keen than it may be made by the moderate use of the strap after setting. As this is the case, how completely ridiculous is the custom of constructing a razor-strap in such a manner as to make it necessarily productive of greater mischief. And yet these are the wonderful straps which render setting unnecessary. But this is not all. Razor-straps, thus formed, are liable to another objection. When they have been used long, a part of the bran with which the smoothing side is stuffed, (for this is the manner of making them,) is forced, by the action of the razor, from the middle to the ends; and these straps, so famous for their softness, their elasticity, and many other equally fine qualities, become lumpy and irregular in their action. From the very construction of them, it is clear that this must be the case; and, besides my own observation of such straps, I have heard it acknowledged by some of the makers of them that however hard they stuff them, (and, by the way, if they are stuffed hard, their boasted excellence disappears,) the case is as I have stated it.

From these, and all other disadvantages, a razor-strap, whose smoothing side is as flat as its sharpening side, appears to me to be free. I add that, when used with moderation, and according to the dictates of good sense, it is calculated

culated to preserve to a razor that nicely finished edge which itself alone cannot produce. Perhaps, to remove from the edge of the instrument that raggedness which is caused by shaving, or by the sharpening side of the razor-strap, a single leather may not be sufficient; but two leathers, of a proper quality, on the smoothing side will completely produce this effect, by permitting the extremity of the edge to receive as great a degree of friction as is necessary for the purpose.

Another mistake in the construction of a razor-strap, arising from the same erroneous ideas as the former, is made by some even of those persons who are aware of the error I have pointed out. In planing the wood of a flat razor-strap, they chuse to leave it so thin as to produce, when the end on it is rested on any thing, a considerable degree of additional elasticity, and, of course, additional declivity towards the middle of it. If what I have already written is not sufficient to convince my brethen of the trade of this error, I submit to their consideration the following questions. What is the form which such razor-straps assume, in the position I have mentioned, during the time of using them? Is not the slope from both ends exactly similar? And, in this circular form, will not the effect, good or bad, which is caused by the declivity of one end, be counteracted by the ascent of the other? This must infallibly be the case when the razor is drawn from one end of the strap to the other, as is often recommended; and, when drawn across the middle from the shoulder to the point, the supposed advantage of the elasticity is lost.

To be consistent, then, with themselves, the admirers of this elasticity should draw one side of the razor from one end of the strap to the middle of it, and the other side from the other end to the middle, likewise; and stop there exactly. If they exceed this point, the whole fabric of their



hypothesis is in danger of being overturned by their own hands; and, without this misfortune, it will have difficulties enow to overcome: for, if the ideas on the tendency of all razor-straps, which have been advanced in this treatise, are well-founded, it will exceed the abilities of Messrs. Packwood, Bland, and other artists as ingenious, but no longer as much known, to reconcile with the dictates of common sense, their favourite doctrine of elasticity.

One more error on this fruitful subject I must beg leave to mention. It is the practice of many strap-makers to leave the wood higher in the middle than on the sides; and thus render it impossible for much of the razor to be brought to bear on the strap at one time. If I could not prove this in ten thousand instances, I should almost despair of being credited. But of what species of folly are we not capable? When I hear any thing advanced in favour of this practice, it will be time enough to reply to it.

The next circumstances to be attended to in the construction or purchase of a razor-strap are the quality and thickness of it's leathers. The best leather for the purpose is universally acknowledged to be calf-skin; and, of course, from the price of the article, the common straps cannot be made of it. In the quality of calf-skins, differently dressed, there is considerable difference. The razor-strap-maker should use those which are most oily.

Care should be taken that no rough part of the skin be used for this purpose. If it be, the effect of the strap on the razor will be irregular, and a good razor may be condemned unjustly.

The leather on the smoothing side of a razor-strap should be double; on the sharpening side, single; or, at least, thinner than on the other side. The reason for the former has been already given; the propriety of the latter is evident from the consideration that the less the leather or  
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the composition, on the sharpening side, gives way to the razor, the thinner and keener will be the edge produced. The simplicity and plainness of this rule have been violated in the straps of even celebrated cutlers.

On the subject of the composition on a razor-strap, what can I say that will reconcile so many differences, and subvert so much error? Shall I say that the public, dearly as it pays for it's knowledge, has yet to learn the extent of it's own ignorance? Yes, the composition, now so generally used, and so generally considered as the wonderful discovery of the day, has been known and used for the same purpose, I believe I may say, for ages. But what will not puffing effect? It can redeem from oblivion the inventions of days that are past, and give to the simplest of preparations the semblance of mystery and darkness. It will procure for unblushing confidence the character of genius and knowledge, and bestow the rewards of the latter on the more prudent possessor of the former.

To the observer of human nature it must be a reflection not entirely uninteresting, that of the numerous claimants on public patronage, of similar merit, but dissimilar pretensions, each has been celebrated in his day, till succeeded by one more novel in his application, though not more meritorious than his predecessor. Thus has it been with the humble subject of razor-straps. In long succession, and of nearly equal excellence, they have been admired, condemned, and forgotten. Should such an observer be at a loss to account for the varying propensities of the public, I believe I can furnish him with a solution of his difficulty. On this common subject, on which nothing more than common sense is requisite, the public have not yet learned to exercise this quality. They have been led astray by confident assertions, and the torch of reason has seldom been held up to them. Ignorant, from the want of reflection, of what it is by no means difficult to comprehend, the proper mode  
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of strapping a razor, they have seized with avidity the scanty and contradictory instructions that have been offered them, and fancied that the gleams of twilight were the glare of meridian light. If there be any merit in this pamphlet, it's merit consists in it's being calculated to undermine some of the erroneous opinions which prevail on the subject of it, by examining minutely the foundations of such opinions, and establishing the instructions contained in it on the basis of truth and reason.

With respect to the composition on the cutting side of razor-straps, I am of opinion that we are not wiser than our forefathers, and that the preparation now so publicly brought forward, so generally approved, though by some so decidedly condemned as totally ineffectual, is equalled, but, probably, not exceeded by many others. At least, I think I could prepare some compositions which, on an examination of their powers, would be found to produce as great and as good an effect as that which is, at present, almost exclusively celebrated.

Mr. SAVIGNY observes \* that, "if the composition with which a strap is charged, be of too sharp a quality, it's nature approaches too near that of a hone, which, though it never fails to give a quick keen edge, seldom produces that smoothness and solidity which are essential, not only to it's cutting pleasantly, but also to it's duration." I doubt the truth of the former part of this remark; because I know of no composition in a proper state which, on leather, will produce such a degree of roughness on the edge of a razor as cannot be easily removed by the smoothing side of the razor-strap. Separate particles, though of the firmest quality, can never possess, in any very great degree, the power of cutting; and I question the possibility of wearing away the edge of a razor too quickly and too roughly by any composition in a fine state that is spread on leather.—Let it, also,

\* See page 34 of the last edition of his pamphlet.



be remembered that, if the roughness which is caused by the sharpening side of the strap can be removed by the other, the composition of most powerful quality is, for a decisive reason, entitled to a preference. The power of the composition arises from it's hardness ; and the firmer it is, the less will the edge of the razor sink into it and be encompassed by it. Of course, such an edge will be the flattest and keenest.

A succeeding remark of Mr. SAVIGNY is more just. He observes, that, " it will require some caution to avoid the  
" other extreme ; for if the ingredients be too obtuse, and  
" ineffectual, they will be equally improper ; for, instead of  
" quickening the edge, they will deprive it of any degree of  
" sharpness it might have had before ; it being a maxim in  
" this particular, commonly true, that what does no good to  
" a razor, seldom fails to do it harm."

I quote this observation, not in order to dispute it's truth, but to express my wish that writers would condescend, when they are able, to communicate to their readers some reason for what they assert, and not exact of them an implicit and unthinking confidence. Whether or not it is " a maxim, commonly true, that what does no good to a  
" razor seldom fails to do it harm," it is true that presenting to the reader a barren maxim is not giving him any information with respect to the cause of the effect before stated, and that to point out this cause and explain this effect require but little penetration, and are attended with but little difficulty.

The reason why a composition, that is " too obtuse and  
" ineffectual, instead of quickening the edge of a razor,  
" will deprive it of any degree of sharpness it might have  
" before," is perfectly consistent with, and, indeed, arises from, the doctrine I have already laid down relative to the tendency of all razor-straps. A composition of bad quality, though incapable of adding to the sharpness of a razor,  
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will, nevertheless, encompass it's edge, and, unchecked by any counteracting power, more quickly diminish it's keenness. Not that such a composition will *wear away the edge* of a razor more quickly than a composition of a contrary quality; for, in fact, it will not produce this effect *so* quickly: but a good composition, while it operates on the extremity of the edge, also wears away the sides and base of that edge, and, by so doing, prevents the proportion between them from being so soon and so rapidly destroyed. This counteracting power a bad composition does not possess, at least, in any considerable degree; but, surrounding the thin extremity of the edge, it is capable of soon diminishing the keenness of what offers so little resistance.

To the remark of Mr. SAVIGNY may be added an observation of more consequence. Compositions, such as we have treated of, are seldom to be met with: and, for my own part, I am convinced that there is no very great difference between any of the compositions in general use. The principal difference in their effects arises from the different application of them; and the same composition will admit of many degrees of difference. This is most strikingly the case in the circumstance to which I allude. The effect, which arises from the worst of compositions, may be caused, likewise, by the best. If, instead of spreading the composition on a razor-strap as thinly as possible, it is spread thickly, the edge of the razor, instead of being sharpened, will be deprived of it's former keenness; and, if a proper quantity of the superfluous composition is removed, the remainder will produce wonders to those who are accustomed to behold effects without tracing them to their causes. All this, however, may be easily accounted for on the principle I have endeavoured to establish; and is, indeed, an illustration of that principle. Yet, simple as is this doctrine, and sure as are it's consequences, an inattention to it's truth very generally  
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prevails; and, though the fault consists entirely in the mode of applying it, the best composition that can be used is often considered and blamed by the public as ineffectual.

I conclude this part of my subject, the composition on the sharpening side of a razor-strap, by observing that, when it becomes dry, a little hog's lard, or mutton-suet, should be spread on it; and that, when, by improper use, or any other cause, it becomes irregular, and ceases to produce it's former effect, the whole of it should be carefully scraped off, and an equal quantity of fresh composition be spread on with a knife in the manner I have before recommended. For this purpose, when it is dry, it should be held for a short time before the fire.

On the smoothing side of the strap, the leather on which (as was before observed) should be double, the composition that is used should be as fine and smooth as possible. This, however, is denied by some makers of razor-straps, who support their opinion by observing that a composition, which possesses not the power of cutting, cannot remove the rough and wiry edge which is caused by setting. But this observation appears to be erroneous. A rough surface will, by being rubbed against a smooth one, become smooth, likewise; and the greatest degree of smoothness can be produced only in this manner. This is precisely the point in question. The roughest parts of the edge are previously removed by the rough side of the razor-strap; the finishing strokes must take place on a surface as smooth as possible. An appeal to fact itself will demonstrate this necessity. A razor-strap that is made in this manner will produce an edge, beyond comparison, more fine and smooth than any other.

Having thus considered the principles on which a razor-strap should be made, and the nature of the composition which should be spread on it, I proceed to point out the manner in which, as it appears to me, it should be used.

The first thing to be attended to is to keep the razor perfectly



fectly flat on the strap during the whole time of strapping. The reason for this direction is, not that "if the back is raised, the hand loses it's only guide; in which case, it could not fail of receiving some injury;" but that, if the back is raised, the extremity of the edge will be too much affected by the leather and the composition, and, together with it's roughness, will be deprived of it's keenness.

On the subject of the best manner of strapping a razor, I particularly wish to induce my readers to exercise the powers of reflection and judgment. The question to be resolved is, what direction of the razor on the strap will enable it to produce the best effect. In other words, will the greater degree of keenness be caused by drawing the razor straightly along the strap from one end to the other, by drawing it obliquely across the strap from the shoulder to the point, or by pushing it obliquely across the strap from the point to the shoulder? This is, I believe, a fair and clear statement of the question. Let us examine each of these modes of operation.

The first of them (that of drawing the razor straightly from one end of the strap to the other) is liable to two decisive objections. In the first place, it is impossible, in such a manner, to strap a razor equally. The sure effects of this method are, that some parts of the razor pass more frequently along the strap than others, that the degree of keenness in different parts is different, and that, in consequence of this irregularity, the instrument does not possess it's full power of cutting. The error of strapping a razor unequally is the most important and most common error which prevails on this subject. I have seldom a razor brought to me which does not bear it's testimony to this truth. Nineteen in twenty of them (and, probably, more) are, in consequence of improper strapping, very keen in one part of the edge, and very blunt in another; and then, forsooth, they are condemned as good for nothing. I lament  
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the pecuniary interest and reputation of any one (and to some minds the latter is the most dear) should depend so much on folly so glaring, and, in many instances, so incorrigible.

The other objection to which this method of strapping a razor is liable, is that the teeth of the instrument do not, by this means, receive that direction which is necessary to it's possessing the greatest possible degree of keenness. But the proper direction of the teeth of a razor is a circumstance which I shall have occasion to consider in another place; and the objection which I first stated is completely decisive on this subject. Indeed, I know of no razor-maker, that adopts this method, whose opinion it is worth my while, or that of the public, to attend to.

The second method of strapping a razor, which I have mentioned, (that of drawing the razor obliquely across the strap from the shoulder to the point) is completely free from the first objection to which the before-mentioned method is liable. In fact, it is impossible to give a razor a more regular edge by strapping it in any manner than by this; and, though, on the whole, I reject this method, I will acknowledge in it's favour that, without considerable care, it is not possible, in any other way, to produce an edge so equal and regular. Very few, however, of those persons who are accustomed to strap their razors in this manner, avail themselves of the full benefit of it. The point of the razor is, in general, neglected. This arises from the custom of lifting the razor from the strap before the point has crossed the whole of it, instead of letting it drop completely from it; and, unless this circumstance is attended to, this part of the edge will possess but little keenness.

The only objection which can be made to this mode of strapping is, that the teeth of the razor do not in this way receive that direction in which, by meeting the object, they  
will



will perform to most advantage.\* But I acknowledge that I regard this objection as of considerable consequence; and that I am induced, by a conviction of it's importance, to give a decided preference to the last of those three different modes of operation which I have stated.

The manner, then, of strapping a razor which I recommend, and which I hope to prove is dictated by a due regard to the nature of the operation to be performed, is to direct it obliquely across the strap from the point to the shoulder. By strapping it in this manner, it's teeth will be formed in such a direction as to meet the object which is to be removed by them; and, by operating in this direction, their power of cutting is increased. Indeed, the man who expects any instrument to perform so well when it's teeth attack the object sideways, as when they are drawn or pushed obliquely against it, must be very ignorant of, or very inattentive to, the principle on which the commonest of all cutting instruments is constructed. Examine the construction of a common saw. Consider in what direction it's teeth are formed, and the principle on which such a direction is given to them. The direction of it's teeth is from the handle to the point; and the reason for this is their being intended to cut, principally, when they are pushed forwards. The teeth of another sort of saw have, it is true, an opposite direction; but this is because it is intended to cut by being drawn backwards. In all cases, the principle is the same;—that of obliquely directing the teeth of the instrument towards the object which they are to cut.

\* To those persons who, in shaving, push the point of the razor upwards, instead of drawing it downwards, this objection, of course, is not applicable: If the propriety of shaving in such a manner be admitted, the propriety of strapping on the correspondent principle must be admitted, also. The mode of shaving must regulate the mode of strapping.



In this manner should the edge of a razor be formed ; because, when this principle is attended to, it will operate to most advantage. Who, indeed, that has ever handled a saw, or properly considered it's construction, can doubt this ? An experiment on so large a scale must produce a conviction in the mind of every one that the teeth of an instrument possess, in a greater degree, the power of cutting when their points meet the object, than when they are brought to the attack in a different line of direction.

If, then, it is granted that the teeth of a razor should be formed on this principle, and that strapping it in the manner I have recommended, will direct it's teeth downwards, the propriety of this manner of strapping must arise from the consideration that the teeth of an edge which is thus formed can most easily and most advantageously be brought to bear on the object. For the proof of this, I refer my readers to the fifth section.

But, say the public in general, and some of those persons who ought to know more of this matter than the public in general, we cannot conceive that the edge of a razor can consist of the minute points which you call teeth, or that, by strapping it in any particular manner, you can give to these teeth any particular direction. To the first objection my reply is, that the edge of *every* cutting instrument is full of teeth, great or small, regular or irregular : that, when these teeth are destroyed, the keenness of the edge is destroyed, likewise ; that a good glass will demonstrate the former, and an easy experiment ascertain the latter. Let the reader draw the edge of his razor across the back of his pen-knife, and he will find that the pressure of it's own weight only has deprived it of it's keenness. Is it possible that so slight a pressure would produce such an effect, if the case was not as I have stated it ?

With respect to the second objection, namely, that, by strapping a razor in any particular manner, we cannot give

to it's teeth any particular direction, or " that wearing  
" away some particles of steel cannot influence the shape of  
" those which remain behind,"\* all that I can say is, that  
I beg such objectors to consider the case a little more atten-  
tively, and then, perhaps, they will be able to conceive  
that removing some particles of the edge of a razor in a  
particular direction will not only influence but determine  
the shape of the adjoining particles. That a razor-strap will  
remove the particles of the edge of a razor in any particular  
direction must, surely, be admitted by those who acknowledge  
that it possesses the power of removing them at all.

Perhaps, indeed, I may make this matter a little more  
clear by observing that, from the nature of the composi-  
tion on a razor-strap, it cannot remove the whole line of  
particles which form the edge of a razor; and that, com-  
posed, as it is, of materials of different powers, the  
hardest of which are separated one from the other, it must  
wear away the particles of the razor's edge at distances  
similar to those of it's own operating particles. That it  
will remove them in similar lines of direction, is the  
necessary result of it's power of receiving them. The  
hone, on account of the closeness of it's substance, will not,  
in any manner of using it, produce the former of these ef-  
fects; nor, as the strap must finish the operation, is it desirable  
that it should.

I imagine that an inattention to this circumstance was  
the cause of the error which I have pointed out; though, as  
Mr. SAVIGNY afterwards admits that the edge of a razor  
does consist of teeth, it is remarkable that he was not  
aware of the necessary inference respecting the possible di-  
rection of them. Teeth, we all know, must be separated  
by intermediate spaces; and the power which caused these  
separations in one direction might, by a different application,  
have produced them in another.

\* See the first edition of M. SAVIGNY's pamphlet, p. 16.

I have acknowledged that, without considerable care, so regular an edge cannot be produced by directing the razor obliquely across the strap from the point to the shoulder, as by drawing it in the contrary direction. This, however, is the case only when the strap or the razor is improperly formed; though it is too true that either the one or the other is generally made without any just regard to the mode of its operation. If, for instance, the razor-strap is not made flat, it is impossible for a well-formed razor, in this manner of strapping, to bear properly on it. Either the point will cut the leather, or it will be entirely missed, and, of course, blunt. If, on the other hand, the edge of the razor is unnecessarily rounded towards the point, as is generally the case, it will not lie flat on a razor-strap of any construction. Either, by elevating the handle of the razor, the point will cut the leather, or, (as is more frequently the case,) it will be missed in the operation. The truth of these observations will be acknowledged by every one who thinks it worth his while attentively to make these little experiments. But when both the strap and the razor are formed properly, when the first is made flat, and the latter strait, as I have before directed, it is as easy to produce a regular edge in the manner I have recommended as in any other.



## SECT. IV.

*Of Washing the Face before Shaving, of Shaving Soap, of Applying the Lather, and of Dipping the Razor into Hot Water.*

WHEN the reader has properly prepared his razor, the next thing which I advise him to do, as conducive to ease in shaving, is to wash his face, or that part of it over which the razor is to pass, with warm water. The good effect of this procedure is to remove the dust and dirt which cling to the skin and beard, and which would diminish considerably the keenness of the instrument. Warm water is preferable to cold, not only because it is better calculated to produce this effect, but because, by rendering the beard more soft, and the skin more smooth and yielding, it will lessen the pain and difficulty of the operation. For the hint which I now offer, I am myself indebted (though with some variations) to Mr. SAVIGNY.

When the operator has proceeded thus far, he must prepare his lather; and this naturally leads to the consideration of the soap which he should use for that purpose. The principal difference of the common soaps is in their strength; and, for domestic purposes, that which will raise the thickest and strongest lather is the best. But, for the purpose of shaving, something more is requisite. Shaving soap must not only possess the power of yielding a thick and durable lather, but be as free as possible from every thing irritating and injurious.\*

\* In this last particular, Naples soap, so much admired by some persons on account of the strength of it's lather, is extremely defective. Of all the shaving soaps in present use, there is not one whose

With respect to shaving powder, my predecessor whom I have so often quoted, sometimes with approbation, and, at others, for the purpose of, I hope, just censure, is of opinion “that the lather raised from soap exceeds that of “the powder.” That this has been “generally found” to be the case, I do not dispute; but I must observe that it has arisen from the ignorance or self-interested conduct of the makers of this article. Shaving powder ought to be nothing but soap ground and finely sifted. But the makers of it are, in general, of opinion that it requires *some pleasant scent*, and that, to produce this effect, and balance the expence which the drying and grinding of it cause, about an equal quantity of *orris* will be advantageous.\* Few of my readers, I suppose, are ignorant that from powdered orris-root no lather whatever can be raised; and there are few likewise, I suppose, who will not perceive that, by supplying the place of soap, it will lessen the effect of a given quantity of shaving powder, and contribute considerably to dull the edge of the instrument.

Shaving powder, when properly prepared, is more easily

component parts are so irritating and injurious as the soap which is called by this name. It is the most caustic, and, of course, the most destructive to the skin, of all soaps; and, in truth, to the production of a needless quantity of lather from a small portion of it, the soundness of the skin of the person using it is completely, and necessarily, sacrificed. Since the first edition of this little work appeared, the questions put to me relative to soaps have been very numerous, and my attention to the subject has been considerable. No soap, I believe, has escaped my examination, and I have myself made many experiments; but the best soap for the purpose of shaving which I have yet made, and which I always use, is the OLIVE-SOAP, composed, in great part, of olive-oil, and uniting the advantage of a durable lather, with the power of softening and healing, rather than irritating, the skin of the person using it.

\* This method of preparing shaving powder was very common when this pamphlet made it's first appearance. It is less so now.



and more quickly raised into a lather than a piece of firm soap. To some, perhaps, it will appear no inconsiderable advantage that it will admit of the use of a soft and pleasant brush; whereas hard soap, unless it is particularly moistened, requires a stiff one.

The best manner of applying the lather is a subject of considerable dispute. Some persons are of opinion that a brush is most proper for this purpose; while others maintain that the hand alone is most effectual. This important question seems to me to resolve itself simply into the question of cleanliness: and, in this view of it, the preference will, probably, be given to the former method.

A subject of much greater controversy is whether the lather itself should be raised with a brush, or be produced by the action of the hand only. The minutiae of the latter method are, first, washing the beard with water, then rubbing it with a piece of moistened soap, and afterwards raising the soap into a lather by the immediate application of the hand itself. This is called *rubbing it in well*: and one would suppose, from the expression, that the admirers of this method imagined that, to produce it's full effect, the lather should be rubbed into the skin, and not into the beard only. —When a stiff beard is suffered to become very long, it may, indeed, be better to have recourse to this method; but this is seldom the case with those persons who are most friendly to this expedient.

The question whether a shaving brush should be hard or soft may be decided in the same manner. The extreme only of softness can render a brush incapable of producing the proper effect.

A consideration of much greater consequence is the *quantity* of lather that should be applied to the beard previously to the beginning of the operation. To this the operator should, indeed, be attentive; for in proportion to the greatness of the quantity will be the ease with which the beard



is taken off. The injury which the edge of the razor receives from the operation, will, also, be lessened by it's rendering the hair as soft as possible; and this will afford a sufficient compensation for the difference of time which is required for this purpose.

The majority of razor and razor-strap-makers have recommended the practice of dipping the razor into hot water as wonderfully conducive to ease in shaving. I am happy in finding that the number of it's advocates decreases daily; and that this long continued absurdity appears, at length, to be viewed in a right light. Too long, indeed, have the favourers of this practice forgotten, not merely that the expansion of the edge will be accompanied by an exactly equal degree of softness, and, of course, that it's supposed good effect must be momentary, but that a razor of perfect excellence, which has often had this trick played with it, can never be restored to it's former state.—Those only who use a microscope in the examination of their razors, can be fully aware of this truth.

## SECT. V.

### *Of the Proper Method of Using a Razor.*

THE proper method of using a razor can be acquired only by practice. But a little previous consideration on a few particulars will facilitate the acquisition of it.

Before the razor is applied to the face, that part of the skin, the hair of which is to be shaved first, should be stretched tightly by the fingers of the left hand. This fixes the hair, and prevents it from so easily escaping the edge of the instrument. When this is done, the razor should be applied to the skin in a flat position, and with a very small degree of pressure. The direction, which it will then assume, will be such as to enable it to attack the hair  
at

at the root, and most quickly to produce the desired effect. Indeed, it is impossible to remove the beard completely, without either adopting this method, or a very bad one, which I shall soon mention. For, if the razor is not pressed, in some degree, on the skin, the hair will bend down before its' edge, and the operation may be repeated, with little effect on the beard, till the skin is completely fretted.

Another method of applying a razor, and of which the most distinguished advocate is Mr. SAVIGNY,\* is to raise the back of the razor, in a small degree, from the skin, and, *in this manner*, enable it to attack the hair at the root. That it will do so in this direction, is admitted; but a little consideration will enable any one to perceive that the stroke of the razor (and this is of some consequence,) will be much shorter, that the difficulty of the operation and the injury which the edge of the instrument receives will be much greater, and the skin much more fretted, by this method of shaving than by that which I have before recommended. That the method alluded to cannot, on account of the nature of the surface, be adopted in all parts of the operation, is true; but it is true, also, that, where it can be adopted, experience has fully assigned to it the advantages I have enumerated. The reader will recollect that, when the hair is removed from the lower part of his cheek, the sensation is less unpleasant than when it is removed from the upper lip, for example; and a little reflection on it's cause will convince him of the propriety of adopting the method I recommend, (and which is practised by most of those persons who gain their livelihood by shaving) wherever it can be adopted. In one case, the razor acts on the principle which I have endeavoured to establish; in the other, on that which appears to me a bad one.

I proceed to point out another defect in the manage-

\* See the chapter on applying a razor in either the first or last edition of his Pamphlet.

ment of a razor which is very general, and which very much diminishes the power of the instrument. This is the custom of directing the edge in a straight line towards that part of the beard on which it is intended to operate, instead of drawing it obliquely down during the time of it's being pushed forwards. The consequence of this method is, that one part only of the edge is brought to bear on the object; whereas the principle on which the instrument is formed is that of cutting, not by the direct application of weight or force, but by the quick succession of it's teeth in the same direction, and over the same part of the substance. But this matter has been so fully illustrated in the first\* section of this treatise, that I conceive is sufficient to direct those, who are not aware of the importance of the error which I have pointed out, to the reconsideration of what I have there advanced. In connection, however, with this subject, I must detain the reader a little longer to remark to him the superiority which, in this view of the matter, the method of strapping I have recommended has over every other method. If, indeed, it was right to expect a razor to cut by the direct application of it's edge to the object, and not by the quick succession of it's points on the same substance, the method of drawing the razor straitly from one end of the strap to the other, (a rule laid down by those who have but little knowledge of the art, and practised with submissive thoughtlessness by a considerable part of the public,) would be, theoretically and practically, the best. If, too, it was, in general, practicable to direct the razor upwards during the operation of shaving, the general practice of drawing it across the strap from the shoulder to the point would, consequently, be well founded. Indeed, I think that those, who are the firm defenders of this mode of strapping a razor should avow

\* See pages 8 and 9,



themselves the determined champions of the corresponding method of using it.—But, if, from a consideration of the nature of the instrument and the principle of it's operation, my readers are convinced that it's power of cutting is increased by the quick succession of it's teeth on the same substance, and by their meeting it instead of attacking it sideways, they will perceive, likewise, that, when they are formed downwards, and when the instrument itself is drawn down obliquely during the time of it's being pushed forward, these points or teeth will, most easily and most advantageously, be brought to bear on the object ; and, of course, that directing the razor obliquely across the strap from the point to the shoulder, is the proper method of strapping it. These circumssances are as links of the same chain ; and those persons, who admit the truth of the premises, must admit, likewise, the justness of the conclusion.

When the operation of shaving is finished, the instrument should be wiped dry, and strapped a little, that no rust may be formed on it's edge. In any other part of it's surface, a little rust will affect only its appearance : in this, it will considerably lessen it's power of cutting.

In washing the face after shaving, cold water, as contributing most to strengthen the skin, is most proper.

THE END.



THE WRITER of this Pamphlet begs leave to inform the Public that his Razors, (which are made of the best steel, and by the best workmen, that can be procured,) are uniformly finished by himself, and most carefully examined by him with a microscope, in order to ascertain whether the steel has received injury in any part of the process of working it, or whether such a degree of skill and attention has been exercised as is necessary to give it a capability of receiving that firm and smooth edge which is so important in such instruments. In the former case, *his name is invariably ground off the blade; which is never sold but in that state,—as avowedly damaged,—and at a low price.*—The readers of this pamphlet may themselves judge what the effects must be of such a practice.

To persons living in the country, or abroad, he begs to state that the fixed prices of the goods he manufactures are as follow :—

	s.	d.	
RAZORS in Black Handles . . . . .	7	6	} each.
Ditto Ivory . . . . .	9	0	
Ditto Tortoiseshell . . . . .	10	6	

RAZOR-STRAPS, 2s. 6d.—3s. 6d.—5s.—7s. 6d.—and 10s. 6d. each.

COMPOSITION (sharpening or smoothing,) in rolls 1s. 6d. and 2s. 6d, each.

OLIVE-SOAP for shaving, in pots 2s. and 4s. each.

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Orders by post, (accompanied with money, or a reference for payment in London,) are executed as carefully as those that are delivered in person. But all letters should be post-paid.

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May 28th, 1821.